



Effectively publishing and
developing Framework for
Excellence: Analysis of user needs
Final Report

April 2009

Effectively Publishing and Disseminating
Framework for Excellence (FfE): Analysis of User
Needs
Final Report

Learning and Skills Council

Final Report

April 2009

30 St Paul's Square, Birmingham B3 1QZ

Tel: 0121 2338900; Fax: 0121 2120308

www.ghkint.com

Document Control

<i>Document</i>	<i>Final Report</i>
<i>Job No.</i>	<i>J5122</i>
<i>Prepared by</i>	<i>Peter Dickinson, Julie Farrell</i>
<i>Checked by</i>	<i>Daljeet Johal; Shaheen Barkat</i>
<i>Date</i>	<i>April 2009</i>

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1	Background to the Research.....	1
1.2	Methodology.....	2
1.3	Structure of the report.....	3
2	CURRENT INFORMATION USES AND SOURCES.....	4
2.1	Introduction.....	4
2.2	User decision making processes.....	4
2.3	Current information and sources used.....	6
2.4	Conclusion.....	13
3	PUBLISHING FfE INFORMATION.....	15
3.1	Introduction.....	15
3.2	User views on the information contained in the FfE.....	15
3.3	Accessing the FfE via the internet.....	18
3.4	Publishing the FfE in spring 2009.....	18
3.5	Publishing the FfE in spring 2010 and 2011.....	20
3.6	Conclusion.....	22
4	CONCLUSIONS.....	23
4.1	Conclusions.....	23
4.2	Recommendations.....	23
5	ANNEX ONE – BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	25
6	ANNEX TWO – FOCUS GROUP INFORMATION.....	27
6.1	Card A: Types of information.....	27
6.2	Card B: Sources of information.....	28
6.3	Card C: Information in the FfE.....	29
6.4	Ways in which the FfE could be presented.....	30

TABLES

Table 1-1 Focus groups of users.....	2
Table 2-1 Information and sources used by young people	7
Table 2-2 Information and sources used by Connexions PAs	8
Table 2-3 Information and sources used by Adult and Non learners.....	9
Table 2-4 Information and sources used by Adult IAG advisers.....	10
Table 2-5 Information and sources used by Employers.....	12
Table 2-6 Information and sources used by Train to Gain brokers.....	12
Table 3-1 - FfE Information – Most and Least Useful	16

FIGURES

Figure 1 User decision making process	4
---	---

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Research

GHK Consulting Ltd was appointed by the Learning and Skills Council National Office (LSC NO) to undertake an Analysis of User Needs for Effectively Publishing and Developing Framework for Excellence (FfE). This is with the intention of exploring how users currently choose learning provision, and how best to publish FfE information so that it effectively informs users' future choices. For the purpose of the study 'users' are identified as *“those who are anticipated to have an interest in Framework scores (learners, employers, skills brokers, connexions and learndirect service advisors, parents and represented bodies of the aforementioned) with the exception of providers, commissioning and regulatory bodies” (LSC ITT specification, July 2008).*

The research is charged specifically with:

- Reviewing existing research evidence concerning learners', employers' and other 'users' (within the parameters of the study) choice of education and training;
- Determining how users currently choose education and training courses and providers – building a picture of how users may make this choice in the future;
- Determining how learning and training information related to users' choice of provision is effectively marketed and communicated;
- Determining the way in which FfE information is best published and disseminated to different user groups in spring 2009 – working within the boundaries of the data that will be available;
- Determining the way in which FfE information is best published and disseminated to different user groups in 2010 and 2011 – including individual group requirements for drill down capability; and,
- Making recommendations for the future development of FfE to ensure the needs of users are met following the Machinery of Government Changes from 2012 onwards.

The study is therefore predominantly qualitative in nature, due to the focus on FfE information outputs in terms of the actual needs and requirements of identified user groups. Whilst there has been a great deal of development work on the FfE, this has tended to focus on the technical aspects, and the robustness, validity and reliability of the information. Attention is now focusing on the communication and presentation aspects of the FfE, especially how different groups of users will/want to access and use the information.

A key aim of the use of information in the FfE is the capacity of individuals (learners and employers) to fundamentally exercise choice. Different groups of learners and potential learners have varying access to different organisations which can support them in their learning choices. In exercising choice about learning and skills provision, however, it is important to note that individuals are often restricted by factors such as: distance; entry criteria; availability of financial, pastoral and other support; and, both methods and times of delivery. The data available through the FfE therefore represents a partial picture in terms of the information requirements of individual employers and learners when exercising choice about which course to undertake, and where to undertake this. It is important that the limitations of FfE data are understood in this context.

1.2 Methodology

The first stage of the project included a literature review to determine what information and processes users choose in making decision about provision and providers. A bibliography of sources used is detailed at Section 5.

In addition, a series of stakeholder interviews were undertaken covering a similar range of questions. Stakeholders included: LSC NO, Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS), Union Learning, The Confederation of British Industry (CBI), UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES), the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), Train to Gain Skills Brokers, The National Union of Students (NUS), Learndirect, and The Adult Advancement Careers Service (AACCS).

The main part of the research involved a series of focus groups with key user groups – learners, employers and IAG intermediaries.

Table 1-1 Focus groups of users

Type of User	User Groups
Learner	Coventry and Coventry Connexions (14-16)
	Henley College, Coventry (16-18)
	Longley Park 6 th Form College, Sheffield (16-18)
	National Learner Panel (19+)
Employer	Skills Fast - Laundry Employers
	Pro-skills
	Skills for Health
Train to Gain Skills Brokers	Business Link South West
	East of England Brokerage Service
Non-learners ¹	Norfolk Training Services
	TWL Derby
Adult and Young Person IAG providers	Connexions PAs - Nuneaton
	Connexions PAs - Swinton, South Yorkshire
	Connexions PAs - South Shields
	Adult IAG Advisers - Guidelines Nottingham

The focus groups asked users:

- What information and sources of information they used at the moment, and which were the most important;

¹ For non learners, we chose unemployed people on DWP pre-employment provision e.g. employability skills. Whilst they were in some form of learning activity they were not involved in any vocational or academic learning and skills provision.

- In what format (level, detail and form of access) did they find this information most useful;
- Would the information in the FfE be of use to them;
- Which format would they prefer the FfE information to be in;
- What were the advantages and disadvantages of accessing this information via the internet; and;
- Users were shown a series of mock ups of how the FfE could be presented to them via the internet, and asked how useful these would be.

The detailed findings from these stages of the research are contained in a series of reports submitted to the LSC NO throughout the study.

This report brings these main findings together to answer the key questions identified by the LSC NO in its tender specification. In addition, an additional literature search and review was undertaken, and a series of final stakeholder interviews with the LSC NO, DCSF and DIUS.

1.3 Structure of the report

The report contains three further sections and two Annexes:

- Section Two reports on users' current use of information in making choices about their future learning and skills opportunities, and the sources of that information;
- Section Three presents users' views on the information included in the FfE and ways in which it should be presented;
- Section Four provides the main conclusions and recommendations;
- Annex 1 contains the bibliography, and;
- Annex 2 contains the information presented at the focus group meetings.

2 CURRENT INFORMATION USES AND SOURCES

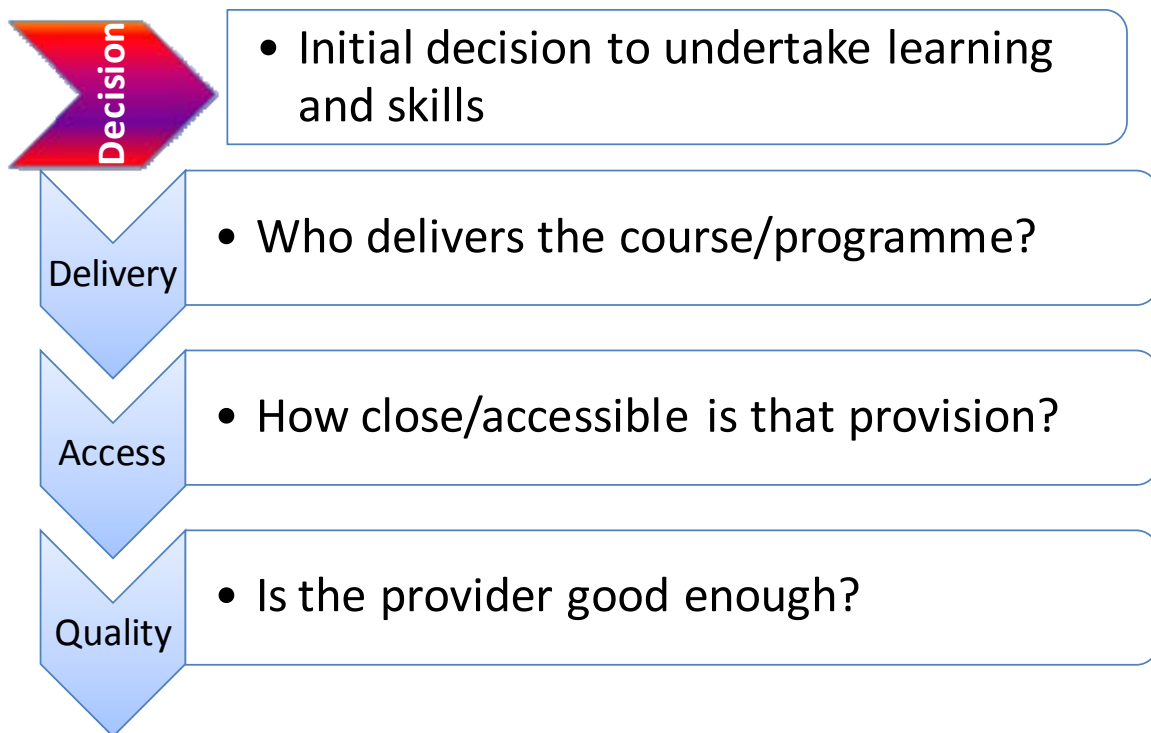
2.1 Introduction

This section looks at the information users currently use in making decision about provision and providers, where they get that information from, access to that information and sources, level of detail and format, and improvements. It brings together the findings from the literature review, stakeholder consultations and the user focus group.

2.2 User decision making processes

It is important to put the main findings of the study in the context of users' decision making processes when choosing learning and skills providers. Whilst we did not specifically ask users about these processes, the decision making models emerged quite strongly from our focus group consultations. Figure 1 summarises this process.

Figure 1 User decision making process



People and employers decide to invest in learning and skills for a number of reasons: redundancy, supporting children's education, returning to work, promotion, career changes, compulsion, improving performance, and to adopt and adapt to new practices and technologies. Some people are already on progression pathways, for example, professional workers, and young people who know which career they want and this provides certain parameters of choice of provision and provider.

Whatever the motivating factor most people and employers decide at some point to undertake learning and skills provision. In making that initial decision, the choice of which course and which provider is often made as well. This could be because:

- There is only one course or programme that meets the identified need e.g. to become a hairdresser, learn to use a specific programme or piece of machinery, learn to read and write.

- Only one provider in the area delivers that provision or in a format that is accessible to that particular user, e.g. there is only one provider that is accessible in terms of distance or learning needs or an employer requires specialist provision. Choice is seen as particularly limited below Level 3 and especially at the level of the Foundation Learning Tier (FLT).
- The career or progression pathway leads to an obvious choice, e.g. moving from GCSEs to A Levels or moving from E2E into an apprenticeship.
- Whoever funds the user chooses the provision and provider, for example, employers and Jobcentre Plus.

Therefore in many cases the decision to invest in learning and skills often identifies the programme and provider as well.

When the decision to invest in learning and skills has been made without identifying the provision or provider, the first question is who delivers it? There are usually a number of sources of information but the most common are providers themselves through provider prospectuses (paper and internet), listings, advertising, and/or direct 'phone calls to a provider.

Having chosen the provider(s) the next decision is how accessible are they. Proximity to where someone lives and works is often the most important piece of information because people tend to go to the provider closest to them. However, accessibility is not just about distance but could be because that provider meets a specific learning need or provides certain support, delivers learning at a certain time (in the evenings, at weekends) or delivers in a certain way, e.g. via the internet, has particular machinery, or delivers to a particular religious, gender, age, sectoral or occupational group.

The next question revolves around the quality of that provider. As we shall see, there is an assumption that most publicly funded provision is of a sufficient standard and so the issue of quality arises only in a minority of cases. The issue of quality usually arises if the most accessible provider (in most cases the closest) fails to meet certain quality standards, for example, it has failed an inspection, had poor success rates etc. It is important to note that the decision is influenced by the *failure to meet* a quality standard rather than *achieving* a quality standard.

Furthermore, as we shall see later in the report, most information on the quality of a provider comes from informal sources, especially the views of peers.

A recent LSC report² identified a series of 'non-negotiable' and 'negotiable' factors that need to be in place for a learner to choose that particular course or provider. The non-negotiable factors were: the qualification offered at the end of the course; the quality of teaching; the location of the provider, and; the time of the course.

Therefore, most users have a fairly straightforward decision making process requiring little formal information of the type that would be included in the FfE because often the choice of provision and/or provider is obvious.

Whilst this may be perceived as a stark decision making process it is a sufficient and successful one³ used by learners, employers and IAG intermediaries alike. If it was not then learner and employer satisfaction ratings of publicly funded provision would not be as

² 'Understanding choice and the empowered learner', LSC, March 2009 http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/LSC_Empowered_Learner_report_final_March09.pdf

³ Ibid found that 85% of adults reported that the process of choosing a course was easy.

high as they are. The more recent National Learner Satisfaction Survey (NLSS) 2007⁴ showed that at least nine out of ten learners were satisfied with their 'current learning experience' in each of the four provider types, with at least one quarter 'extremely satisfied' and less than one in ten 'dissatisfied'. Similarly, according to the National Employer Skills Survey (NESS) in 2007⁵, 84% of employers were 'quite satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the 'quality of teaching or training received at FE colleges' and just under half (48.3%) were 'very satisfied'. Less than 6% were 'not very satisfied' or 'not at all satisfied'.

This point is further underlined by pilot work on learner satisfaction for the FfE. A key issue in developing the Responsive to Learners Performance Indicator (PI) 1 – Learner Views was differentiating between different provider learner satisfaction ratings because they were in such a narrow range.

Therefore the reason why there is not a more sophisticated decision making process is because, for the large majority of users there is either limited choice and/or there is a good enough provider close by.

2.3 Current information and sources used

2.3.1 Young learners

The literature review and stakeholder interviews found that young people's learning and skill choices are determined predominantly by:

- Type of learning and provider they are currently in – in terms of whether there are clear and identifiable progression routes within their current provider or outside it. This is linked to previous choices about careers.
- Location – for example, proximity to home and/or work, and access issues, especially in rural locations.
- 'Fit' with ability – whether the learner meets enrolment criteria; this also involves making a personal judgement on the likelihood of success.
- 'Fit' with needs – meeting individual requirements for a recognised qualification and its potential personal and/or professional uses/value.
- Duration– the length of time and commitment required to complete learning; longer courses and/or intensive courses can be daunting for some learners.
- Support – financial and other pastoral support available.
- Choice of peers – where their friends are going and the choices they are making.

In the focus groups we asked users to identify which sources of information they currently used⁶ (unprompted) and then presented them with a list of information and asked them which would be of use to them.

When unprompted, young learners mentioned location, entry qualifications; length of the course, expected benefits of doing the course (e.g. achieving a particular qualification, and progression). Table 2-1 provides a summary of the prompted and unprompted responses.

⁴ See http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/NLSS_Highlights_Report_final_July08.pdf

⁵ See <http://researchtools.lsc.gov.uk/ness/home/home.asp#>

⁶ Focus groups were asked to first identify information and sources of information unprompted and were then presented with a list. The full list varied by user group see Sections 6.1 6.2 for full details.

This is largely consistent with the findings from the literature review and stakeholder interviews above.

Table 2-1 Information and sources used by young people

Young learners			
	Unprompted	Prompted	Most important type of information
Information used	Delivery location, entry qualifications, length of the	Success rates of previous learners, qualifications needed	Delivery location, entry qualifications
Sources of information	PAs, teachers/tutors, prospectus, provider visit, provider website, careers fair, other internet website	Careers library, careers fair, careers advisers, family, friends, PAs, teacher/ tutor, prospectus, other provider literature, visit provider, other	PA, careers adviser, careers fair, provider visit, friends, visits to the provider, internet search engines (e.g. Google)

Source: GHK FfE user needs focus groups

When provided with the full list of information types the 14-16 user group reported most of these would be useful, including success rates as a measure of quality. This was the only user group not to mention location as an important factor.

The 16-19 user groups reported a more limited range of factors - specifically location, entry requirements and peer recommendations; they considered most of the types of information shown to them would not be useful. The reasons for this related to the degree of subjectivity of the information (e.g. based on particular learner views), which is available elsewhere and in a better format (such as learner views from people they trusted). Otherwise, these users considered the indicators did not measure what they wanted, for example, learner destinations may not show entry into the specific jobs they wanted.

The evidence gathered for this research demonstrates the reliance on limited types of information relates to the reality that for many learners there is no choice. Furthermore, that what is nearest potential learners is to them seen to be of sufficient quality necessitating that they do not need to look beyond this. This is also a perfectly rationale choice: why spend time travelling further afield if what you want is on the door step, and is good enough?

In terms of sources of information, the focus groups, literature review and stakeholder interviews found that younger learners used a wide range of sources including: IAG intermediaries (PAs, careers advisers); other people (such as, teachers, family and friends); websites; provider prospectuses; provider visits; and, telephone helplines. The most useful sources were: PAs; careers advisers; careers fairs; visits to providers; friends and family; and internet search engines. However, provider websites were seen by one group as the least useful because they often don't provide the specific information users need.

The LSC's 'Empowered Learner' research found that young people were generally passive consumers of IAG information i.e. preferring to receive it than seek it out. They used a range of formal (such as, careers advisers and teachers) and informal (including friends and parents/carers) IAG sources. Experiential sources of IAG are valued as being more informative.⁷

Broadly, young people were happy with the information available to them, their knowledge of them, the sources of information and access to them, a finding echoed by the

⁷ LSC March 2009 Op Cit.

‘Empowered Learner’ research.⁸ They could suggest no improvements. They usually wanted information about a specific course, although provider level information could be helpful, such as, facilities. They wanted to be able to access this information themselves but also to discuss it with an IAG intermediary if required.

All users would prefer information available in a variety of formats, digital (including CD-ROM) and paper based.

2.3.2 *Connexions Personal Advisers (PAs)*

The findings from Connexions PAs come solely from the focus groups as no secondary data was available on this user group at the time of the research.

Overall, in terms of the ability to exercise choice PAs thought that there was a gap in the range of provision available for young people; for those young people with 5+ GCSEs there was a lot of choice, but for other young people there was no or limited choice.

When asked which information they used, PAs mentioned a variety of sources: location of provision; entry qualifications; success rates; destinations; other entry requirements; learner satisfaction; financial and non-financial support; course facilities; and, times. However, as was the case with young learners, the full range of information was mentioned only when prompted (see Table 2-2).

Table 2-2 Information and sources used by Connexions PAs

	Connexions PAs		Most important type of information
	Unprompted	Prompted	
Information used	Delivery location, entry qualifications, success rates, provider reputation	Destinations, other entry requirements, learner satisfaction, financial support, non financial support, course facilities, course times	Delivery location, destinations, entry qualifications, success rates, training and apprenticeship vacancies
Sources of information	Own experience and that of colleagues, provider/area wide prospectuses, employers, direct provider contact	All information sources are potentially useful depending on the request for information	Own/colleagues experience, all potentially useful depending on the specific needs of learner

Source: GHK FfE user needs focus groups

Unprompted, key information related to provider location, non-financial support (especially for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities), and success rates. Destinations were only important but only if it provided specific information about the sorts of jobs people got. For example, is someone undertaking a Level 1 in construction going into a construction job? Provider facilities (except childcare) and reputation (because it can be subjective) were of least importance.

PAs tended to rely on their or their colleagues experience and expertise as the main source of information, provider/area wide prospectuses and provider websites. When prompted, PAs said that all sources were potentially useful, for certain individuals or groups of young people.

PAs would like information at mostly at course level but some at provider level depending on the needs of particular clients. The main improvement they suggested was more timely information as their interviews with young people start in September but information only comes through in October.

⁸ Ibid.

2.3.3 Adult learners

The literature review and stakeholder interviews found that the choices of younger and adult learners are similar but with key differences. For example, adults are much more likely to have not participated in learning and skills for a number of years, require provision close to where they work rather than where they live, have different access issues (e.g. car parks rather than public transport), and require childcare support. Adults are more likely to have other commitments and so the timing of provision is more important.

In the user focus groups we spoke with adult learners and ‘non learners’ who were unemployed people undertaking DWP pre-employment courses e.g. employability skills.

Table 2-3 Information and sources used by Adult and Non learners

Adult learners			
	Unprompted	Prompted	Most important type of information
Information used	Delivery location, entry qualifications, duration, course fees and costs, progression	Success rates, destinations, other entry requirements, learner satisfaction, financial support, non financial support, course facilities, course times, provider facilities and provider	Delivery location, entry qualifications, financial support, course facilities, course times
Sources of information	Learndirect, ULR, tutor, Jobcentre, Connexions, phone provider, open days, careers	All are potentially useful	Nextsteps, Learndirect, tutor, prospectus, provider website
Non learners			
	Unprompted	Prompted	Most important type of information
Information used	Delivery location	Destinations, learner satisfaction, financial support, provider facilities, provider	Delivery location, financial support, destinations, provider facilities, provider reputation
Sources of information	Jobcentre, current provider	Nextsteps, library, provider website	Nextsteps, current provider, library, Learndirect

Source: GHK FfE user needs focus groups

When unprompted, adult learners mentioned delivery location, entry qualifications, duration, course fees and costs, and progression. For non learners, location was the only information mentioned (see Table 2-3).

Like younger learners, adult learners mentioned almost the full range of information sources, particularly when prompted. Whilst they had not necessarily used this information, it might be useful to know and they would not necessarily rule out any source. Non learners mentioned destinations, learner satisfaction, financial support, provider facilities, provider reputation and course times.

Delivery location, entry qualifications, financial support, destinations (especially for unemployed people), financial support, course times, course and provider facilities (especially childcare), and course reputation were the most important to adult and non learners. The ‘Empowered Learner’ research concurred with these findings concluding that the qualification, quality of teaching, location, and course timings and costs were the most important.⁹

Success rates and destinations (but not for unemployed people) were the least useful because they could be based on learners who were different to themselves. Unemployed

⁹ Ibid.

people said that they had not heard of most of the sources of information (although may find them potentially useful).

Adult learners raised concerns over accessing information for particular groups of learners (e.g. people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities) if it was not available in an accessible format.

Both adult and non learners said that information should be available in a range of formats, accessible by yourself or with an adviser.

Adult learners and non learners identified a number of sources of information including IAG intermediaries, provider visits and 'phone calls, Jobcentre Plus, provider websites, but felt that all of the sources could be potentially useful.

Nextsteps, learndirect, the current provider and tutor, prospectus, provider website and the library were the most important sources. However, some adults thought that some of these sources were not useful for various reasons, for example, Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) only dealt with union members and Jobcentre Plus staff were seen as unhelpful (they did not know what provision was available). Family and friends were seen by some as not useful because they would have a narrow perspective.

In terms of improvements to sources of information, adults wanted information to be up-to-date and prospectuses should include financial support information. Non learners wanted Jobcentre Plus staff to be better trained providing IAG.

2.3.4 Adult IAG advisers

The findings on Adult IAG advisers come solely from the focus groups as no research was available on this user group.

Table 2-4 Information and sources used by Adult IAG advisers

Adult IAG advisers			Most important type of information
	Unprompted	Prompted	
Information used	Delivery location, entry qualifications, other entry requirements, course fees,	Success rates, destinations, non financial support (childcare), provider facilities	Delivery location, entry qualifications, financial support, destinations, provider facilities
Sources of information	Prospectus, provider visit, provider website	Learndirect, careers fairs, Jobcentre, non provider websites (e.g. UCAS), sector	Learndirect, prospectus, provider visit, provider website, Jobcentre Plus (for unemployed)

Source: GHK FfE user needs focus groups

Table 2-4 shows that when prompted, Adult IAG advisers mentioned most sources of information as useful, which is similar to adults. Unprompted, Adult IAG advisers mentioned location, entry qualification, other entry requirements, course fees, financial support and course times.

Location, entry qualifications, financial support, destinations and provider facilities (especially childcare) were identified as the most important types of information.

Provider facilities (except for childcare) and reputation (because it could be subjective and unfounded) were viewed as the least useful.

Timeliness of information could be an issue because things can change so quickly.

Most sources of information were identified. Like PAs, Adult IAG advisers were happy to consider a range of sources and encouraged their clients to find out information for themselves as one source may be right for one person but not another.

The most important sources were learndirect, provider visits, prospectuses and websites, and Jobcentre Plus for unemployed clients. However, they would like to be able to speak directly to tutors, and have easier navigation of provider websites. ULRs and libraries were seen as the least useful sources of information.

2.3.5 **Employers**

The literature review and stakeholder surveys found that, as with previous groups of users, they are a heterogeneous group and their needs will vary by size, sector, nature of the organisation (multi national/sole trader) and location. Generally, large employers are more likely to plan and budget for their learning and skills needs.

The literature review and stakeholder interviews identified a number of factors which affect employers' training choices when choosing training provision and providers. However, key factor affecting employer choice could be identified as being determined by (in order of importance):

- Compulsion - the need for accredited learning arising from business need and identified workforce skill gaps.
- Location – locally-based providers offering obvious advantages in terms of accessibility. Employers were, however, prepared to look further afield to source a provision with a particular sectoral or vocational specialism.
- Pre-existing relationships with providers – much of the existing evidence base identifies this as a key factor for sourcing training provision.
- Flexibility – in terms of the provision itself and the ability to tailor provision to meet employer need (on the job, bite sized provision etc., and in terms of the mode of delivery (e.g. WBL).
- Provider reputation.
- Financial – availability and level of support, and value for money.

While much of the existing evidence base reveals that sourcing training provision relies heavily on existing relationships between employers and providers, there was some evidence that external reviews, and the testimonials of past learners and other employers could be of influence. Word of mouth passed through a variety of employer networks was a very important source of information.

The literature review and stakeholder consultations identified word of mouth, networking, existing provider links and the internet as the main source of information for employers when sourcing training providers and provision. The next most popular route was through Business Link (telephone contact for those unable to access the Business Link website).

The focus group meetings with employers found that, unprompted, location was the main information type used, in particular, employers expected training to take place on their premises in whole or in part (see Table 2-5). When prompted employers mentioned most sources as being potential useful. Location, course times, financial support, provider facilities, type of delivery and provider flexibility were identified as the most useful types of information which is similar to those identified through the literature review and stakeholder consultations (see above).

Table 2-5 Information and sources used by Employers

	Employers		Most important type of information
	Unprompted	Prompted	
Information used	Delivery location	Success rates of previous learners, location, course times, financial support, non financial support, provider facilities, type of delivery, provider reputation, provider flexibility, Brokers	Delivery location, course times, financial support, provider facilities, type of delivery, provider flexibility
Sources of information	Direct provider contact, employers guide, tendering, professional bodies, personal recommendation	Prospectuses, websites, all the sources have potential, Train to Gain Skills Broker, Other Skills Broker, Prospectus/other provider literature, other internet	Direct provider contact, provider websites, sector provider directory, no provider websites (e.g. sector specific), specialist professional body.

Source: GHK FfE user needs focus groups

One employer focus group thought that learner views, destinations, employer views, and financial health would not be useful to them because they only sourced training for bespoke qualifications. However, the other two groups said that all information was potentially useful, even if they have not used it themselves.

As far as sources of information are concerned, employers mentioned most as potentially useful. When asked to identify the most useful sources, they mentioned provider contact, provider websites, sector provider directories, other websites (sector specific), and professional bodies. Some employers already know the providers so they would tend to access information directly from them, or need this contact in order to build a relationship with them.

Skills brokers (too general), learndirect, libraries, ULRs were seen as the least useful.

As with the other groups, employers wanted both course and provider level information, and available in a variety of formats.

2.3.6 Train to Gain brokers

The findings on Train to Gain brokers come solely from the focus groups as no research was available on this user group.

Table 2-6 Information and sources used by Train to Gain brokers

	Train to Gain Brokers		Most important type of information
	Unprompted	Prompted	
Information used	Delivery location, flexibility of provision	Success rates, entry qualifications, financial support, non financial support, provider reputation, type of delivery	Delivery location, success rates, course times, provider reputation, financial support, flexibility of provision
Sources of information	Own experience and that of colleagues, ULRs, employer/sector organisations, library, provider website,	All information sources are potentially useful depending on the request for information	Own/colleagues experience, direct provider contact, provider websites, employer/sector organisations

Source: GHK FfE user needs focus groups

Unprompted, Train to Gain brokers identified location and flexibility of provision as the main types of information they used. When prompted they mentioned success rates, entry qualifications, financial and non financial support, provider reputation and type of delivery.

When asked to identify the most important types of information, they mentioned location, success rates, course times, financial support, provider reputation and the flexibility of provision.

One broker group said that destinations and course facilities (because provision would take place on the employer's premises) as the least useful, but the other two focus groups thought that all the information types could be potentially useful.

Brokers relied on their own or their colleagues experience for sourcing this information, as well as direct provider contact, provider websites, and employer or sector organisations. ULRs (too general or eclectic) and libraries were the least useful sources.

One broker group said that they tended to know what provision was available because they focused on a particular sector and/or geographical area and so knew who delivered what. Formal (e.g. evaluation forms) and informal employer feedback was the main indicator of quality. If they were unsure about what provision was available, they would seek advice from their colleagues or use the Employer Guide to Training.¹⁰

The other broker focus group said that they would like a definitive, on-line directory of which courses were available, but who would update and manage it?

2.4 Conclusion

People and employers decide to invest in learning and skills for a number of reasons, and in making this decision often help decide which course to do and where to study it. This is because there is limited choice available.

Having chosen a particular course, the next question is who delivers it? On-line or paper prospectuses usually answer that question. Proximity is a key factor for learners (and thereby for their advisers) and then quality of provision. Users usually choose the provision closest to them. This is usually of sufficient quality for their needs, as is evidenced by the results of user satisfaction surveys. The large majority of users are satisfied with their provision, a significant minority are often very satisfied, and very few are dissatisfied.

Therefore users usually want to know who delivers the course they want, which of these providers is nearby and, unless there is evidence to the contrary, believe it is of the quality they require.

This decision making model provides the context for other types and sources of information they use:

- **Younger learners** – require information primarily about proximity and entry requirements. Other information is not to be ignored and is of potential value but is not central to their decision. They often use and consult with a wide range of information sources, especially Connexions PAs, careers advisers, provider prospectuses, provider visits, and friends and family. They are happy with current types and sources of information and how accessible they are.
- **Connexions PAs** - PAs thought that there was limited choice of provision available, especially for those young people with fewer than 5+ GCSEs. For PAs, delivery location, destinations, entry qualifications, success rates, training and apprenticeship vacancies were the most important types of information. PAs tended to rely on their or their colleagues experience and expertise as the main source of information, although all sources were potentially useful.

¹⁰ See www10.employersguide.org.uk/egtnat/

- **Adult learners** - Delivery location, entry qualifications, financial support, destinations (especially for unemployed people), financial support, course times, course and provider facilities (especially childcare), and course reputation were the most important types of information to adult and non learners. IAG intermediaries, current tutor and provider, provider prospectuses and websites were the most useful sources, but all types and sources of information could be potentially useful.
- **Adult IAG advisers** - location, entry qualifications, financial support, destinations and provider facilities (especially childcare) were identified as the most important types of information. They were happy to consider and use a range of sources depending on their client's needs, although other intermediaries and provider information were the most important.
- **Employers** - location, course times, financial support, provider facilities, type of delivery and provider flexibility were identified as the most useful types of information. Direct provider contact, provider websites, sector provider directories, other websites (sector specific), and professional bodies were the most important sources although most were potentially useful.
- **Train to Gain brokers** - location, success rates, course times, financial support, provider reputation and the flexibility of provision. Brokers relied on their own or their colleagues experience for sourcing this information, as well as direct provider contact, provider websites, and employer or sector organisations.

All users would like the information available in a variety of formats, learners and employers were happy to use the information and sources on their own but would also like the opportunity to discuss it with an IAG intermediary. Course level detail was important, although some users would want to know some information about the provider overall.

3 PUBLISHING FfE INFORMATION

3.1 Introduction

This section looks at the ways in which FfE information should be published and disseminated to the different user groups in spring 2009, spring 2010 and beyond.

The interim report, based on the literature review and stakeholder interviews concluded that:

- Of the information contained in the first publicly available version of the FfE in spring 2009 (Version 1) the most useful to users will be destinations and Qualification Success Rates (QSRs) but they will not be available at the level which most users want them i.e. course level.
- Of the information to be contained in full publicly available version of the FfE published in spring 2010 (Version 2) and subsequent versions of the FfE, the most useful is likely to be destinations, QSRs, and learner and employer satisfaction.
- Of the financial PIs, only use for resources is likely to interest users. However, the PI itself is unlikely to be helpful as users want to know about the end result of this use of resources i.e. quality of equipment, facilities and buildings.
- Users will require information at course level for it to be of most use to them.
- Users will also require qualitative information rather than statistics. For example, whilst learner or employer satisfaction ratings will be of use, they would also like to read about why learners and employers were satisfied/dissatisfied and which elements they were satisfied/dissatisfied with.
- Much information which users require is descriptive of the course and provider and will not be included in the FfE but is available from other sources.

3.2 User views on the information contained in the FfE

Users were shown the types of information that would be included in the full version of the FfE. They were asked which information would/would not be of use to them when making decisions about provision and providers; how they would use that information and how they would prefer to access it.

The PIs were not defined but were explained in more detail if responses from users suggested that they did not fully understand what the PI meant. This was particularly the case with use of resources. Users were interested in such a measure if it could be used to measure how much providers invested in learner facilities and resources, however, that particular PI is a technical and composite indicate covering funding economy, resource efficiency, and capital.

Table 3-1 shows which users groups found the information in the FfE to be *most* and *least* useful.

Most users said that the views of employers and learners would be useful. However, care must be taken in interpreting this. No user groups identified employers and learner views as the most important in the first part of the focus. In addition, users are likely to want more qualitative and course specific information rather than an overall rating.

QSRs, destinations and Inspection Grades were also mentioned, but again care must be taken when interpreting this information. In the first part of the focus group some users did not feel this information would be useful to them because it could refer to a group of learners who were different to them, or it may not be specific enough (e.g. destinations

into a specific type of job rather than employment per se). One user said that it doesn't matter how many people have passed it, you have to be committed yourself.

Destinations and reputation were the only areas identified by any user focus group in the first part of the focus groups as being most useful to them that could be measured by FfE PIs. However, destinations were also identified as being the least useful by at least some user focus groups because they need a particular level of detail.

This implies that although users may identify certain types of information of being useful to them, it will only be meaningful if it measures particular aspects of provision in a particular way.

Generally the PIs in the financial dimension were found to be the least useful to users. However, some learners and employers thought that financial management and control would be useful because they would not want to choose a provider at risk of going bust.

Table 3-1 - FfE Information – Most and Least Useful

User group	Most useful information	Least useful information
Young learners	Learner views (for some), destinations, pass rates, Government Inspection results, financial health, Qualification Success Rates (QSRs) (for some), use of resources	Learner views (for some), QSRs (for some), financial management and control
Adult learners	Learner views, employer views, QSRs, Inspection grade, financial health, use of resources (for some)	Destinations, employer views, financial management, use of resources (for some)
Non learners	Destinations (whether it leads to a job), learner views, amount of employer training	Inspection grade
Employers	Learner views (for some), employer views, destinations, amount of employer training, QSRs (for some), TQS, Inspection grade, financial health (secondary)	Learner views (for some), employer views (for some), destinations (for some) QSRs (for some), financial management and control, use of resources, financial health (for some)
Connexions PAs	Learner views, destinations, employer views (for some), QSRs, Inspection grade	Employer views (for some), Inspection Grades (for some), financial information
Adult IAG advisers	Most could be useful but only in the right format i.e. specific and accessible	Financial information but could be useful for some courses
Skills brokers	Learner views (for some), destinations (for some), employer views, amount of employer training (for some), QSR, Inspection grade, financial health	Learner views (for some), destinations (for some), amount of employer training (for some), use of resources

Source: FfE user needs focus groups GHK

Users were asked for the information they thought would be most important to them, how would they use this information, how they would like to get hold of it, and what level of detail would they need:

- **Young learners** – most young learners said they would be unlikely to use information in the FfE because the choice is limited. They tended to know the course they want to do and the providers in their locality who delivered it.

Qualitative information would be important e.g. not just whether learners were satisfied with their course but why they were satisfied with it. For those who might find FfE information useful, this would be of secondary importance to them.

- **Adult learners** – location was important for adult learners and so this necessarily limited the amount of comparisons that could be done. Adults would prefer the FfE information to be available via the internet (so it is more likely to be up to date), although they would also like it available in other formats – paper (e.g. in booklet form that they can carry around and consult when convenient), DVDs and contained alongside other information in prospectuses. They would like to be able to compare providers and have access to an adviser if they need to discuss it with someone.
- **Non learners** – location and job entry were important to non learners: *“If it is offering something other than a job I am not interested”*. Many non learners were unaware of the information and sources discussed in the focus group but felt that it was potentially useful. FfE information needs to be presented at the level of course, and they would like to access it alongside an adviser so they could discuss it with them.
- **Employers** – would like information on both course and provider: *“course first, then provider”*. They would use it to supplement information gained elsewhere (word of mouth, networking events), and would like it on the internet, and in a format that enabled them to make comparisons.
- **Connexions PAs** – would like the information in a paper-based format so they can carry it around with them and consult when necessary and on the internet. However, if it is to be an internet based source it needs to be up to date and have the same information for each provider. PAs would want the information broken down by level of provision as well as course.
- **Adult IAG advisers** – comparison between providers at course level, so clients can make a choice (but this depends on there being a choice available).
- **Train to Gain brokers** – felt that the FfE would duplicate information available elsewhere: *“We don’t want another website”*. There should be links to other, qualitative information but there should be: *“one mandatory database [sic i.e. website], not more!”*

Thus most respondents want the information at a more detailed level than that of provider. Many would not find provider level information useful, although some would want to assess the overall performance of that provider. This has implications for the overall scoring grade as this will only be available at provider level.

Most users wanted the information available in both paper and digital format. Paper-based formats (e.g. a booklet that can be printed or is generally available) has the advantage that it is portable and can be more conveniently consulted where there is not internet access. Having the FfE available on a website would make comparisons easier and it could be brought up to date more regularly and immediately. It would also facilitate links to other websites (especially provider websites). Some users would also like qualitative information in addition to quantitative data, especially learner views about the provision.

Generally, users were interested in the FfE as a potential source of information but it needs to present the information in the right way and at the right level. Currently, it is likely to be a secondary source of information as other variables (distance, entry requirements) are more important. Also whilst some users may be interested in the FfE

other sources are more useful because they are based on more personalised information. For example, many IAG intermediaries would use their own/colleagues knowledge and employer feedback, one large employer does not commission provision without a formal tendering process, so there are limitations for some users on how important the FfE could be to them.

3.3 Accessing the FfE via the internet

The LSC wanted us to specifically ask users about accessing information via the internet. This was not a problem for users as it was an accessible and flexible source of information, and most of them were using it anyway.

However, users would want information available in other, more transportable, formats, especially paper documents. This was because there were other limitations to the internet, especially the digital divide, and connectivity. No users mentioned issues over security when accessing the internet.

Users were presented with mock ups of how the FfE may look as a website (see Section 6.4). Generally, users liked the look of them but would like to be able to select providers by distance, and be able to select, rank and sort the information. Some could not understand the usefulness of presenting provider level information only. Users would need help in understanding the PIs.

Some IAG intermediaries felt that they look like and would duplicate other information, such as, area prospectuses. What they wanted was FfE information to be available on current websites rather than have to go to yet another source to get this information. One Connexions PA queried whether they would be able to access local information for national providers. For example, they would want to know the destinations and success rates of learners from their area, not across the whole country.

3.4 Publishing the FfE in spring 2009

A version of the FfE will be published in June 2009. In the version which will be made public, three performance indicators (PIs) will be available¹¹ – *learner destinations*; *qualification success rates* and the *Inspection Grade*. Information will be available for every LSC funded provider as long as their learner destination survey is statistically valid. This will be published on the FfE website based on an underlying database of information. There will be little functionality e.g. being able to select and sort information.

The PIs will only be available at the level of the provider and so users will not be able to, for example, identify the success rates of particular provision, curriculum areas or specific courses.

In terms of the usefulness of the PIs publicly available, few users mentioned success rates, destinations and Inspection Grades when unprompted. When prompted most user groups did mention success rates and destinations, however this was not of major importance for those consulted; most users reported wanting more detail e.g. success rates by course, and destinations into particular jobs. Few mentioned Inspection Grades.

Consequently, the information that will be available in spring 2009 through the FfE, and how it is made available, is unlikely to meet the needs of most users. This has important

¹¹ There will also be a version of the FfE which will be made available to providers. This will contain information on the full range of PIs but only for that provider. Whether the provider makes this information available is up to them. Provider PIs will be available through the LSC's provider gateway. Providers will be able to benchmark their performance against national averages for each PI. This report focuses on what information will be publicly available.

implications for the FfE in terms of managing expectations in the short-term given that few users will find much value in it.

The strategic position of the FfE is also developing. Whilst most stakeholders are aware of the FfE, few can comment on how it should be developed as these discussions are just beginning to take place. For example, there is little understanding of how the FfE would relate to the developing AACs, and none of the Advancement Network Prototypes (ANPs) prototypes refer to the FfE.

Key issues that it would be important to consider as part of publishing the FfE in spring 2009 ahead of full implementation in 2010 and 2011 would need to include :

- Linking in with IAG developments and changes in IAG services for adults and young people; what are the implications of the Qualifications and Curriculum Framework (QCF); is there potential for including other areas of publicly funded learning and skills provision, such as, DWP funded training?
- Users want to be able to select, group and sort information. The June 2009 version could start to develop the ability of users to select providers within a certain area (e.g. miles radius), they may want to select only those indicators of interest to them, they may want to select providers that meet a certain threshold.
- Links with other information – apart from where provision is located, many users wanted information about the course itself e.g. entry requirements, course fees and costs, financial support, flexibility of provision etc.
- The FfE will be only one of a large number of IAG sources, both publicly and non-publicly funded. Users mentioned Connexions, providers, learndirect, area prospectuses and Employer Guide to Training websites, but they also mentioned prospectuses, and wanting the ability to discuss course and provider information with an IAG intermediary, peer or other person (e.g. a family member). In addition, there are a number of private IAG providers and other sources of information available through social networking sites.
- Media formats - users had few concerns about accessing FfE information over the internet but they also reported requiring it in other formats, particularly paper based, but also other digital media, such as, CD-ROM. This is so information can be accessed when users are unable to go on-line, but also to be able to sit down and discuss it with someone.
- The research demonstrates there is limited strategic and wider operational awareness of the FfE at present. None of the IAG intermediaries consulted were aware of the FfE. IAG should be treated as a process and the FfE as an element in that process. Users' decision making is unlikely to become more sophisticated unless it becomes part of a process, and links with IAG intermediaries, careers advice and planning within schools, employers becoming more sophisticated in their learning and skills planning and budgeting are all elements in improving the sophistication of the decision making process of which the FfE could form an important part.
- It will be important to ensure that explanatory information is provided with the FfE in a format that is attractive to users and in a form that they understand. Some users thought that the use of resources PI would be helpful when choosing a provider because it may indicate how much that provider invests in learning resources. However, the indicator itself is quite technical and complex and may not provide users with the information they were expecting.

3.5 Publishing the FfE in spring 2010 and 2011

By the spring of 2010, the whole of the FfE will be widely available. It is intended that users will be able to search by postcode and type of provision. It will link into other websites, such as the Vacancy Matching Service (VMS) and the Employer Guide to Training. By this time Machinery of Government (MOG) changes will mean the responsibilities of the LSC will have been passed on to the Skills Funding Agency, the DCSF and the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS). There are likely to be other important developments, including a possible change of Government, which are likely to impinge on the further development of the FfE.

Technological changes will also mean that digital information, how it is presented and used will also change. Therefore advising on how the FfE should be published needs to be based on what we know at the moment.

The elements identified in the previous section – strategic links, functionality, links with other information and sources etc. - will have to be monitored and linked into the FfE's development. Also the use of the limited version of the FfE must be monitored and used to inform the FfE's further development.

There are likely to be three major changes which will impinge on the FfE:

- **Technological developments** – there will be important changes in the way in which people access and interact with digital information. Technological convergence will mean that there will be much broader access to internet based information. At the moment we are seeing increasing usage of the internet by mobile phones, but in the next few years, digital TVs, MP3 players, games consoles etc. may all be used for a variety of different functions, including internet access. Simultaneously broadband speeds and memory are increasing and so the types and complexity of information (especially moving images) on hand held devices will also increase. Content will also be required to be available on all these different platforms, and also transferable between them.
- **Information convergence** – with the development of Web 2.0, social networking, and aggregation, there will also be a convergence of digital information. At the moment, accessing different web sites, and the information within them, has to be undertaken sequentially. It is likely that future developments will mean that this can be done simultaneously, with web tools available to bring together a range of information into one place. This could be through a much more sophisticated version of RSS feeds or by giving users the ability to select, download and combine information from several sources. For example, at the moment rather than going to a career website, a provider website to find out course details, the FfE for success rates, and another website about financial support available, this information could all be brought together in one place by the user.
- **User management of information** – within education and training, the breadth and availability of digital information means that the role of the tutor is changing from teaching to helping learners manage their own education and skills development. This is likely to happen in IAG as well. The user focus groups identified that this is happening non-digitally at the moment. For example, young people collect a range of formal and informal information from a range of sources, some of them digital, some paper and others from direct experience (e.g. provider visits). In the future, more of this information will be available on-line, learner, provider and IAG intermediary blogs, increased formal IAG resources on-line (including the FfE), increased informal IAG resources on-line (social networking). There will be much more information (accurate and inaccurate) available to users

about courses and providers. Users will also be able to communicate with other users more effectively through web based social networks and other social networks, such as, Twitter. The role of IAG will have to change from providing IAG to helping users access and intelligently use the plethora of information sources available to them.

There are tools that are currently being available which link the IAG process of school pupils at different stages, for example, the information contained in Individual Learner Plans (ILPs) is directly fed into area prospectuses. This forms the basis of consultations with IAG advisers but also feeds into post-16 providers planning of the demand for particular types of provision because future options and careers are identified in ILPs.

The implications of these trends for the FfE are that it will have to compete with a broader range of formal and informal information sources, must be available in a range of formats, and integrate with a broader range of information sources. This means that the FfE will have to be enhanced to be more attractive and useful to users, for example:

- Being available at the level of detail users want, especially at course level and by type of destination (i.e. not that people got a job but what types of jobs);
- Including qualitative information from the learner and employer views survey in addition to data giving proportions of learners or employers who are satisfied or dissatisfied – why are they satisfied or dissatisfied;
- Include podcasts or vodcasts of learners who have left the course and what they are doing now, e.g. 'A day in the life of...';
- Include videos of activities which the provision includes, for example, one learner during a provider visit for a forensics course had a montage of a crime scene and associated activities, this could be presented on-line;
- Case studies of learners and employers by different types of user;
- Have more information available in graphs and charts;
- Create tools to allow users to benchmark and compare different providers and provision;
- Availability in a wide range of formats, including paper based; and,
- Contain more information/links to information about the course, especially entry requirements, costs, financial and non-financial support available.

The implications for the FfE in 2010 and beyond is not in the performance rating information but what other information is available, how users use the FfE, and links with other information.

However, whilst the FfE must be aware of these technological, and use of technology developments, it also needs to pay attention to more practical and mundane issues, such as:

- Keeping information up to date;
- Ensuring ease of navigation;
- Ensure that all learners, potential learners and non learners have access to it; and,
- Explaining what the PIs are and what they mean, for example, one group of unemployed learners said that they were not familiar with a lot of the information in the FfE e.g. Inspection Grades, the Quality Standard, never mind Financial Management and Control.

3.6 Conclusion

Generally, users were positive about the idea of the FfE overall and that some of the information it contained could be potentially useful. However, they felt that the information it contained was secondary to how they made their decisions or would not be available in the level of detail they required.

The PIs in the financial dimension were found to be the least useful to users.

Most respondents want the information at a more detailed level than that of provider. Many would not find provider level information useful, although some would want to assess the overall performance of that provider.

Most users wanted the information available in both a paper and digital format.

Accessing the FfE through the internet was not considered a problem, although users would want it available in a more transportable, paper based format as well.

Users generally liked the look of the mock ups we presented to them and liked the functionality of being able to select and sort information. However, some IAG intermediaries felt that they looked like and would duplicate other information, such as, area prospectuses. What they wanted was FfE information to be available on current websites rather than have to go to yet another source to get this information.

The information that will be available in spring 2009 through the FfE, and how it is made available, is unlikely to meet the current needs of most users. The strategic position of the FfE is also still developing, particularly as wider strategic discussions on the role of the FfE in informing users decisions are only just beginning to take place.

Therefore, attention should be given to linking the FfE in with other IAG developments; how users can select, sort, rank and benchmark information; links to other information and sources; positioning the FfE relative to often well used and regarded existing sources of information; making the FfE available in different formats; strategic and operational promotion of the FfE, especially with the developing AACS, Connexions and Train to Gain services and IAG intermediaries, and; developing explanatory information which can be understood by a diverse range of users.

By the spring of 2010, the whole of the FfE will be publicly published. The further development of the FfE will take place against a radically changing strategic, organisational and operational background (especially the MOG changes), as well as important political and economic changes.

There will also be important technological development in hardware, software and the ways in which people use and manage information. The implications of these technological trends for the FfE are that it will have to compete with a broader range of formal and informal information sources, must be available in a range of formats, and integrate with a broader range of information sources. This means that the FfE will have to be enhanced to be more attractive and useful to users.

The implications for the FfE in 2010 and beyond concerns what other information is available, how users use the FfE, and links with other information. But there are also a series of more mundane but equally crucial concerns inherent to the FfE of the timeliness of information, usability, accessibility and embedded information explaining the FfE and PIs.

4 CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Conclusions

Most users utilise types and sources of information about learning and skills providers and provision within a limited decision making process. The decision making process is confined because choice is restricted, either because there is only one accessible provider who delivers that provision or most providers are of a similar but sufficient quality so proximity is the key determining variable.

Therefore, users primary information needs are who delivers the provision they want and how far away are they. They then require additional information about the course, especially, what the entry requirements are, but may also require information about the times of the course, costs and facilities. This information is currently readily available, and users access it through IAG intermediaries, provider visits, prospectuses or on-line sources.

Sometimes users require information about quality and responsiveness but this is usually in a qualitative format gathered from the views of peers.

Users usually require information at the course level and in a variety of formats.

The information in the FfE does not currently meet users needs. Even of the type of information appears useful to them it will not be available in the format they require i.e. at the level of the course. The FfE could potentially be useful to some users but it does not meet their primary information requirements.

4.2 Recommendations

Evidence from this research has shown that it is the potential drill down functionality and links into other sources where the FfE has the opportunity to add most value from a user perspective, enabling comparison of providers within a specific distance, and performance data at curriculum and course level. There is a danger that by promoting and disseminating the FfE too widely before this type of data is available could result in the FfE being discounted as a potential valuable resource. Working within the boundaries of the data that will be available for publication in the short-term it will therefore be important to manage expectations both internally and externally; a limited roll out of the FfE in spring 2009 could support this.

The publishing of FfE in June 2009 does however present opportunities for further development. This could usefully involve further piloting work to refine and consolidate:

- *Strategic links* – how does the FfE relate to important IAG developments and changes in IAG services for adults and young people; what are the implications of the QCF; is there potential for including other areas of publicly funded learning and skills provision, such as, DWP funded training?
- *Operational links* – the research demonstrates there is currently limited awareness of the FfE, particularly across IAG professionals. There therefore needs to be promotion of the FfE across the range of IAG organisations: Connexions PAs, Nextsteps advisers, learning and skills brokers, Learndirect advisers and other staff (e.g. Jobcentre Plus advisers). Performance data is one element in a range of information users access when exercising choice about learning and it will be critical that the FfE is linked into IAG services for it to be useful in informing user choice. The Continuing Professional Development (CPD) needs of these professionals in utilising the FfE should also be taken into account.

- *Functionality* – users want to be able to select, group and sort information. The June 2009 version could start to develop and test drill down capabilities such as regional, distance comparisons of providers and provision, success rates by curriculum areas and course types, which this research has identified as being of most value to user groups.
- *Links with other information and sources of information* – the FfE will be only one of a large number of IAG sources, both publicly and non-publicly funded. The June 2009 version could start to identify what other information is available and how best it can be linked into the FfE.
- *Media formats* - an important finding of the study is that users want the information available in a variety of formats. Thought must be given to how the FfE could be made available: on paper, printing and/or downloading pamphlets or booklets; and accessibility through a variety of formats, such as, podcasts, facebook, Skills Accounts, area prospectuses etc.
- *Supporting information* – explaining the FfE and its indicators in a user friendly way will be a challenge, especially for the financial dimension, if users are to use the information correctly.

The next version of the FfE can start to explore these elements but it must do so by involving users in its design and development.

Predicting what is going to happen beyond 2009 is difficult as there will be a number of strategic, organisation, operational and technological changes and developments which the FfE will need to align with. The FfE will need to be available on a wider range of hardware devices, especially handheld, be able to link in with software developments both within the learning and skills sector (e.g. integrated 14-19 IAG systems) and in the wider world (information convergence), and in the ways in which users manage and use the increasing types and sources of information available to them.

5 ANNEX ONE – BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ASW Consulting (2003) Client Needs for Information, Advice and Guidance Services on Learning and Work, Department for Education and Skills: Research Brief 749.
<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RB479.pdf>
- British Chambers of Commerce report (2008), UK Skills: Making the Grade
- Credit Works (January 2006), Adult Learning, Skills and Progression to Level 2: a study of market failure
- ECOTEC (May 2007) 14-19 Education and Skills Workshops with Young people: An Events Reports for the DfES <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/documents/Young%20People%20Event%20Workshops.pdf>
- Edexcel (2008) Taking Stock: CBI Education and Skills Survey
http://www.cbi.org.uk/pdf/skills_report0408.pdf
- GHK Consulting Ltd, (2007) National Evaluation of the Career Development Loans Programme
- GHK Consulting Ltd. (2009) Independent Review of Framework for Excellence
- GHK for DfES (2002), Evaluation of the Connexions Service Pilots
- GHK for LSC Humberside, North Yorkshire and West Yorkshire (2006), Evaluation of the Cluster and Sector Skills Development Initiative
- GHK for LSC NO (2004), Barriers to Participation in Sparsely Populated Areas
- GHK for LSC Shropshire (2007), Reasons for the Underachievement and Lack of Participation of Young Males In Shropshire
- GHK for LSC South Yorkshire (2007), Evaluation of the 14-19 Pathfinders in Doncaster and Sheffield
- GHK for the LSC Black Country (2006), Strategic Area Review of 16-18 provision in Dudley
- GHK for the LSC NO (2008 unpublished), The Train to Gain Supply Chain Review
- IFF Research Ltd. (2007), Workforce Training in England 2006, for DfES Research Report No. 848
- Institute for Employment Studies (2007) Reasons for Early Leaving from FE and Work-based Learning Courses, Institute for Employment Studies
- Institute for Employment Studies (February 2007), Assessing the Net Added Value of Adult Advice and Guidance
- KPMG FfE Pilot Evaluation Reporting (2008)
- Learning and Skills Network and NUS (2008), The True Cost of College
- LSC (2005) National Learner Satisfaction Survey: Guidance on the core methodology and core questionnaire
- LSC (2006) FfE Consultation Response Paper
- LSC (2007) FfE Raising Standards and Improving Choice: LSC
- LSC (March 2008) Empowered Learner Presentation, Summary Paper
- LSC (July 2008) National Learner Satisfaction Survey 2007: FE

- LSC (July 2008) National Learner Satisfaction Survey 2007: Personal and Community Development Learning
- LSC (July 2008) National Learner Satisfaction Survey 2007: Work-based Learning
- LSC (March 2009), Understanding Choice and the Empowered Learner
- LSC / DIUS (May 2008) National Employers Skills Survey 2007: Main Report
- LSC Employer Training Choices: Paper from LSC on evidence relating to ways in which employers choose training
- LSC Northumberland (January 2004) How Major Employers in Northumberland Buy Learning Services
- National Learner Panel (2007) FfE Response Paper2007
- NFER (2006) How do Young People Make Choices at 14 and 16? NFER (2006) – Chapter 4 (<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR773.pdf>)
- NIACE (July 2006) Embedding Information, Advice and Guidance in Learning Provision for Adults: A Report for the LSC
<http://www.niace.org.uk/Research/IAG/Embedded%20IAG%20Report.pdf>
- RCU Focus Group reporting (June 2007) Report on Learner Perceptions and Information Needs
- RCU for the LSC NO (October 2008), Strategies to Increase the Accessibility of the Gathering of Learner Views Within the FfE
- Scottish Executive (2006) Looking to Learn: Investigating the Motivations to Learn and the Barriers Faced by Adults Wishing to Undertake Part-Time Study
- Skills Commission (2008), Inspiration and Aspiration: Realising our potential in the 21st Century
- Skills for Business (August 2007) Skills Upgrading Needs: The Challenge for Employers and Training Providers in Scotland and Northern Ireland, SfB Research Report 26 (<http://www.ukces.org.uk/pdf/070822%20R%20Research%20Report%2026.pdf>)
- TH-NK LSC (February 2007) Online Marketing Interim Report
- UKCES (November 2008), Skills for the Workplace: Employer Perspectives, Evidence Report 1

6 ANNEX TWO – FOCUS GROUP INFORMATION

6.1 Card A: Types of information

Young Learners / Parents / IAG / Adults / Non Learners	Employers / Skills Brokers
Success rates of previous learners	Success rates of previous learners
Destinations of previous learners	Destinations of previous learners
What qualifications you needed to get on the course	Eligibility criteria
How satisfied learners/employers are with the provider or course	How satisfied learners/employers are with the provider or course
What other skills or abilities you needed to get on the course	Where the course or training took place
Where the course or training took place	Financial support for employer
Financial support for learners e.g. ALG or help with travel or to buy equipment	Non-financial support ,e.g. advice and guidance
Non-financial support e.g. advice and guidance	Facilities/type of delivery
Facilities to do with the course e.g. equipment	Times of the course – hours or days
Provider's facilities e.g. gym, state of the buildings, crèche	Provider reputation
Times of the course – hours or days	Provider flexibility
Provider reputation	Brokers previous knowledge
Other	Whether an employee will leave role
	Other

6.2 Card B: Sources of information

Adult / Non - Learners	Young Learners / Parents	IAG	Employers / Skills Brokers
Nextsteps Adviser	Connexions PA	Next Steps Advisor	Train to Gain Skills Broker
Learn Direct	Connexions Direct/Other	Learn Direct	Learn Direct
Union Learning Rep	Schools Careers advisers	Work Learning Rep	Union Learning Rep
Teacher/tutor	Teacher/tutor	Library	Library
Library	Careers library	Careers fair	Employer/Sector Organisations/SS C
Employer	Library	Prospectus/other provider literature	Prospectus/other provider literature
Jobcentre	Careers fair	Visit to the provider e.g. open day/evening	Direct provider contact
Prospectus/other provider literature	Prospectus/other provider literature	Provider website	Provider website
Provider website	Visit to the provider e.g. open day/evening	Employer	Networking event
Family member	Provider website	Job Centre Plus	Other Skills Broker
Friend	Family member	Other internet website	Other internet website
Other	Friend	Other telephone helpline	Other telephone helpline
	Employer	Other	Other
	Other internet website		
	Other telephone helpline		
	Other		

6.3 Card C: Information in the FfE

	Feedback from previous learners and employers
A	Results of a learner views survey
B	Learner destinations e.g. what others have go on to do
C	Results of an employer views survey
D	Training Quality Standard Accreditation
	Information on the performance of the training provider
E	The amount of training a provider does with employers
F	How many learners passed the qualification last year
G	The results from an official Government Inspection
	Information about how well the training provider is managed
H	Financial health e.g. how financially sound a provider is
I	Financial management and control e.g. how good their financial planning is
J	Use of resources e.g. how much money the training provider spends on running the courses or The state of the buildings and equipment it has

6.4 Ways in which the FfE could be presented

Slide 1



Framework for Excellence

Advanced search

Keywords

Provider name

Distance

Postcode

Type of Attendance

Qualifications

Duration

Display results

Available Courses

Your search has identified 3 courses

Select rating

Course Title	Distance (miles)	Attendance	Satisfaction
Advanced Apprenticeship in IT Support Services ABC College Venue: Start Date: Duration: One to three years See more details	2.5	Full Time	63%
InformationTechnology Apprenticeship DEF IT Academy Venue: Start Date: Duration: One to three years See more details	3.0	Full Time	54%
InformationTechnology Apprenticeship Level 2 XYZ College Venue: Start Date: Duration: One to three years See more details	5.0	Full Time	48%

Slide 1

This shows information based on a search on a keyword, distance from where you live, type of attendance, type of qualification and length of study.

It shows all those courses at providers within a certain distance, attendance, and what % of last year's students were satisfied with it.

Other information from the Framework for Excellence e.g. destinations of last year's learners can be selected one at a time.

More information about the course and provider can be accessed by clicking on [See more details](#)

Slide 2



Framework for Excellence

Provider search

Course subject

Distance

Postcode

Available courses

Your results

The providers offering **IT Apprenticeship** within 5 miles of **B3 1ZQ** are:

Order by success rate Order by distance

Select rating

Provider	Distance (miles)	Attendance	Success rate	
ABC College	2.5	Full Time	85%	More details
DEF IT Academy	3.0	Full Time	79%	More details
XYZ College	5.0	Full Time	68%	More details

Slide 2

This shows information based on a search on a keyword and distance from where you live.

You are able to select individual course types.

It shows all those courses at providers within a certain distance, attendance, and what % of last year's students qualified (success rate).

You are able to sort training providers by distance and success rate.

Other information from the Framework for Excellence e.g. destinations of last year's learners can be selected one at a time.

More information about the course and provider can be accessed by clicking on [See more details](#)

Slide 3



Framework for Excellence

Course Search

Design your search by dragging items onto the **Search Builder**

1. Please select a **region**



Search Builder

You have selected:
Subject: **IT**
Qualification: **Apprenticeship**
Type of study: **Part time day**

You are rating the results with:
Leamer satisfaction

Search

2. Choose a **subject**

- Business & Administration
- Engineering
- English
- Humanities

4. Choose the **type of study**

- Full time
- Part time day
- Part time evening
- Weekend

3. Choose a **qualification**

- Course certificate
- GCSE or equivalent
- Apprenticeship
- NVQ level 1/2/3

5. Choose a **rating**

- Succes rate
- Learner satisfaction
- Learner destinations
- Inspection grades

Course Details

Your search produced the following results:

Course	Learner satisfaction
Advanced Apprenticeship in IT Support Services ABC College Venue: Start Date: Duration: One to three years See more details	78%
InformationTechnology Apprenticeship DEF IT Academy Venue: Start Date: Duration: One to three years See more details	72%
InformationTechnology Apprenticeship Level 2 XYZ College Venue: Start Date: Duration: One to three years See more details	65%

Slide 3

This shows information based on a drag and drop search on broad subject, type of study and qualification.

Information from the Framework for Excellence can also be selected one at a time.

Users are only able to specify their region.

You are not able to able to sort on any information.

More information about the course and provider can be accessed by clicking on [See more details](#)

Slide 4



Framework for Excellence

Overall Provider Details

Please enter your postcode

Provider	Success rate	Leamer satisfaction (% satisfied or very satisfied)	Leamer destinations	Inspection grades	Distance to your postcode (miles)
ABC College, Anytown	55%	45%	48%	3	2.5
Abbey College, Anytown	63%	59%	55%	2	6.0
Birchfield Community College, Chigley	71%	64%	59%	2	8.0
BLM Training Ltd, Anytown	74%	70%	76%	3	4.0
Churchill Academy, Camberwick Green	58%	49%	48%	2	1.8
Forest Training Solutions, Chigley	67%	58%	61%	4	12
Grange College, Chigley	65%	55%	56%	3	5.0
Highbury Computer Training Ltd, Trumpton	72%	60%	65%	1	8.5
Manor Farm College, Camberwick Green	51%	44%	41%	5	16
Norton Sixth Form College, Trumpton	75%	63%	70%	2	4
PDQ Training Ltd, Anytown	63%	52%	64%	3	8
Windmill Academy, Camberwick Green	51%	38%	41%	3	2.6

Slide 4

This shows information of providers within a certain distance from their postcode area.

Users are able to compare providers by more than one type of information from the Framework for Excellence.

No further information is presented on the provider, department or course.

Slide 5



Framework for Excellence

Provider Department Details

Please enter your postcode

Select a rating:

- Success rate
 Learner satisfaction
 Learner destinations
 Inspection grades
 Distance to your postcode

Provider	Agriculture	Building & Construction	Business & Administration	English	Humanities	IT
ABC College, Anytown	55%	45%	48%	56%	53%	47%
Abbey College, Anytown	63%	59%	55%	61%	56%	50%
Birchfield Community College, Chigley	71%	64%	59%	54%	59%	54%
BLM Training Ltd, Anytown	74%	70%	76%	69%	71%	65%
Churchill Academy, Camberwick Green	58%	49%	48%	45%	47%	57%
Forest Training Solutions, Chigley	67%	58%	61%	72%	75%	64%
Grange College, Chigley	65%	55%	56%	60%	54%	59%
Highbury Computer Training Ltd, Trumpton	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	78%
Manor Farm College, Camberwick Green	51%	44%	41%	52%	66%	62%
Norton Sixth Form College, Trumpton	75%	63%	70%	68%	59%	52%
PDQ Training Ltd, Anytown	63%	52%	64%	68%	63%	68%
Windmill Academy, Camberwick Green	51%	38%	41%	46%	49%	44%

Slide 5

This shows information of providers and their departments within a certain distance from their postcode area.

Users are able to compare providers by more than one type of information from the Framework for Excellence.

No further information is presented on the provider, department or course.

Slide 6



Framework for Excellence

Provider Department Details

Please enter your postcode

This table shows overall scores. Click on a star rating to see specific department scores.

Order results by:

- Provider
- Success rate
- Learner satisfaction
- Learner destinations
- Inspection grades
- Distance to your postcode

Provider	Success rate	Learner satisfaction (% satisfied or very satisfied)	Learner destinations	Inspection grades	Distance to your postcode
ABC College, Anytown	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
Abbey College, Anytown	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
Birchfield Community College, Chigley	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	☆☆	★★★★☆
BLM Training Ltd, Anytown	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	☆☆	★★★★☆
Churchill Academy, Camberwick Green	★★★★★	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★	★★★★★
Forest Training Solutions, Chigley	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	☆☆	★★★★☆
Grange College, Chigley	☆☆☆☆☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Highbury Computer Training Ltd, Trumpton	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★	★★★★☆
Manor Farm College, Camberwick Green	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	☆☆	★★★★☆
Norton Sixth Form College, Trumpton	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
PDQ Training Ltd, Anytown	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
Windmill Academy, Camberwick Green	★★★★☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆

Agriculture ★★★★★
 Building & Construction ★★★★★
 Business & Administration ★★★★★
 English ★★★★★
 Humanities ★★★★★
 IT ★★★★★

Slide 6

This shows information of providers within a certain distance from their postcode area.

Users are able to compare providers by more than one type of information from the Framework for Excellence.

Information is also shown by department for the providers and information selected.

Information can be sorted by provider and Framework for Excellence information.

No further information is presented on the provider, department or course.